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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [IR](#) [NL](#)  
SUBJECT: TORTURE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST DUTCH TROOPS

Classified By: CDA Chat Blakeman; reasons 1.4 (b, d).

[¶1](#). (SBU) Summary: A major Dutch daily reported November 17 that Dutch military intelligence officers had abused prisoners in 2003 in al-Muthanna province, Iraq. Following a Cabinet meeting later in the day, Defense Minister Kamp issued a statement that the allegations had been investigated at the time and that no criminal offenses were uncovered. But Kamp agreed to form a committee to review the matter. The newspaper report came less than a week before the November 22 Dutch elections and drew widespread political comment. End summary.

[¶2](#). (U) Major daily de Volkskrant carried a banner headline November 17: "Dutchmen Torture Iraqis." According to the paper, Dutch military intelligence officers engaged in "heavy-handed" interrogations in 2003 in al-Muthanna, including sensory deprivation, sleep deprivation and dousing with cold water. The practices were discovered in November 2003 and were ended, the paper said. According to the account, Kamp was not informed and military authorities did not refer the case to prosecutors.

[¶3](#). (U) Kamp disputed major elements of the account. In his public statement, Kamp said the incidents had been investigated by military police at the time and that no criminal wrongdoing had been found. But he said an independent committee would be established to investigate how the issue had been handled.

Political fallout

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[¶4](#). (U) The report surfaced five days before national elections, and drew immediate comment from across the political spectrum. Opposition Labor leader Wouter Bos called the allegations "shocking" and said they "smelled like a cover-up." Other opposition leaders echoed his sentiments. Prime Minister Balkenende said that "if these facts are correct, it is shocking." An anchor on television news station NOS commented: "The Netherlands has been so critical of the U.S. behavior in Iraq. It would be terrible if we were doing the same."

Afghanistan tactics also an issue

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[¶5](#). (SBU) The report followed by two days politically sensitive revelations about Dutch tactics in Afghanistan. Leading daily NRC Handelsblad reported November 15 that Dutch forces in Uruzgan have cooperated with U.S. advisors, to

screen prisoners and to draw out Taliban fighters. The GONL has maintained publicly that Uruzgan is first and foremost a reconstruction effort and that Dutch troops should engage the Taliban only when necessary. Second, the GONL has assured Parliament that extensive procedures are in place to separate Dutch forces from U.S. detention operations.

16. (C) MFA Security Policy officer Pieter Jan Kleiweg told poloff the GONL remains firmly committed to the NATO operations plan for Afghanistan and to the ISAF mission. He said that Dutch Chief of Defense Staff General Berlijn and MFA Director General for Political Affairs Pieter de Gooijer had spent the best part of the morning discussing Afghanistan, and that their prime concern was that the U.S. and other allies might doubt this commitment. Kleinweg agreed the timing of the Iraq and Afghanistan stories was unfortunate, but he would not hazard a guess on possible political ramifications.

BLAKEMAN